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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LIBREVILLE 000397

SIPDIS

AF/C FOR LISA KORTE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/27/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GB](#)  
SUBJECT: GABON: JEAN PING SENDS AN AU WISEMAN TO  
LIBREVILLE FOR THE ELECTION

Classified By: Ambassador Eunice Rediick for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) In addition to sending an election observer team to Gabon, African Union (AU) Peace and Security Commission President Jean Ping also dispatched a high-level envoy to facilitate a smooth transition to the new President. Former Senegalese Prime Minister Moustapha Niasse called on the Ambassador to discuss his mission and meetings with Gabonese officials, candidates, civil society, the European Union (EU), and Gabon's bilateral partners. Niasse said his mission represents AU efforts in preventive conflict resolution to ensure a peaceful, democratic political transition. He will depart Libreville prior to the election but will return soon after if the results are contested, a likely response from the large field of candidates. Niasse has requested the U.S. and French ambassadors, and the EU representative act as an informal contact group to support democratic transition. END SUMMARY.

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AU CONCENTRATING ON POST-ELECTION STABILITY  
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¶2. (C) At the request of AU PSC President Jean Ping, former Senegalese PM Mustapha Niasse visited Libreville the week of August 21 to meet Interim President Rose Francine Rogombe and other officials, presidential candidates, civil society and resident diplomats. Niasse, accompanied by AU peace and security expert Amadou Diongue, told the Ambassador and poloff August 27 that his mission was to assess the pre-election political situation and offer his services to facilitate dialogue and a democratic transition after the election.

¶3. (C) Niasse said as a result of discussions at the AU Summit in Sirte, the Peace and Security Commission was seized with engaging in preventive conflict resolution. Jean Ping, a former Gabonese foreign minister, requested Niasse to visit Libreville as a &wise man8 who would listen to and develop a rapport with political actors before the election. Niasse told the Ambassador he had been close to the late President Bongo and had known his son Ali Bongo since his youth. Niasse met with most of the 23 candidates, including ruling PDG candidate Ali Bongo, former PDG leaders and independent candidates Casimir Oye Mba and Andre Mba Obame, and opposition candidates Zacharie Myboto and Pierre Mamboundu.

¶4. (C) Niasse told the Ambassador he is prepared to use the credibility of the AU to help ensure a peaceful transition to a new government. When asked about the possibility the Gabonese Government would look to outside groups like the AU to bless the election results, Niasse simply answered by stating he was hoping for a &good win8 on August 30. Niasse also dodged questions regarding inconsistencies and delays in the electoral lists, and questions about the PDG,s

intentions after the election.

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AU SEEKS DIPLOMATIC PRESS BY U.S., EU, AND FRANCE  
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15. (C) Jean Ping also requested Niasse meet the French and U.S. ambassadors, and the EU representative in Libreville. Ping told Niasse that France, the U.S. and the EU carried weight with Gabon,s leaders and their envoys could play an important role in the post-election transition as an informal contact group. The group would be able to emphasize the importance of peaceful, democratic transition and good governance during the critical weeks following the election.

The Ambassador said she would consult with the French ambassador and the EU representative about post-election messages to Gabon,s leadership and coordination with Niasse.

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FANG REMAIN FRACTURED  
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16. (C) During the discussions Niasse did note concerns about the role of ethnicity in Gabonese society and the pending elections, particularly the role of the majority Fang. When asked about the possible consolidation of opposition candidates, he said he had heard rumors that the &prominent8 Fang candidates were looking to ally under one banner, but even if such an event occurs, Gabon would lack a &sole Fang candidate8 due to the numerous Fang presidential hopefuls.

17. (SBU) Note: On August 28, international media carried reports that 11 independent and opposition candidates had aligned themselves behind Mba Obame, a Fang. The source was Mba Obame's campaign staff. Among the 11 who reportedly acknowledged their support for Mba Obame were Jean Eyeghe

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Ndong and Paul Mba Abessole -- both Fang. However, another independent candidate and Fang Oye Mba denied his participation in the alliance. Non-Fang candidates who also denied their participation in the "manipulation" of the candidates included Jules Aristide Bourdes Ogouliguende, Victoire Lasseni Duboze and Bruno Ben Moubamba. In response to the reports of the alliance, an Interior Ministry official said it was too late to delete candidates from the ballots and the Electoral Commission had received no notification from candidates who wished to withdraw.

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) Comment: Niasse,s mission has been very low-key with no press coverage. The Ambassador will contact French and EU counterparts to compare notes on Niasse,s visit. His mission could be useful if election irregularities and charges of fraud lead to increased tension. Niasse,s goal of a stable transfer of power in post-election Gabon reflects a general desire by the Gabonese for the election to go smoothly and for the country to begin moving on in the post-Omar Bongo era ) no matter who is the next President.

END COMMENT.

REDDICK